

## Duxbury Field Notes

By FAHY BYGATE

Well, it's nearly April and that means Piping Plovers have returned! The good news is that this year, there are more nests than ever before!! On Duxbury Beach, we have located three or four nests at Saquish, High Pines, etc but in addition to the nests on the beach, there are some other very unusual sightings this year.

A Duxbury golfer found something strange while playing the Duxbury Yacht Club Golf Course this week. A pair of adult Pipers has built a nest in a sand trap on the 13<sup>th</sup> green!! Massachusetts Audubon members authenticating the nesting explained to me that the presence of both adults at the nest confirms the sighting. The adults have scraped out a shallow depression in the sand and lined the nest with soft, brown pine needles from Christmas wreaths from the doors of nearby homes. The presence of this nest will, of course, mean that an area one mile by one mile will be quarantined until August as is required by Federal laws preventing the disturbance of any nesting migratory bird.

This is not the end of the Piping Plover story, however. At least three cranberry growers have noticed the presence of strange nests in several of their bogs. At this writing, six have been identified as Piper nests! While naturalists rejoice over all these sightings, some bog owners expressed anger at the closing of their bogs until the birds leave the area.

In another extraordinary story, the battle over dogs on the beach has ended. In a late night session, Duxbury selectmen voted to ban all dogs on Duxbury beach at all times. This means leashed animals, too! Starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, no pets are allowed anywhere on the beach. Angry opponents to the new law stormed Town Hall this morning. A group supporting the new ruling, Citizens Against Tailwaggers joined the opponents and a shouting match ensued. The police finally established law and order but not before two members of CAT were bitten! Further opposition to this ruling is expected but for now, it seems no dogs will be tolerated on the beach at any time.

In the midst of all this rancor in town, I was happy to receive two reports from local naturalists. At the newly constructed Duxbury Senior Center, Barbara Alden-Standish was puzzled by what appeared to be a pile of debris on the roof of the Center. Barbara, always alert to natural phenomenon, immediately abandoned her bingo game and investigated. The debris turned out to be the nest of two California Condors!! There has not been a confirmed nesting of this species since 1903. Massachusetts Audubon representatives say that Global Warming is the cause of this rare occurrence. Please stay clear of this area until late July when the newly hatched birds will fledge.

The last unusual report came to me from Nancy Bennett who has observed a pair of Bald Eagles occupying the Osprey pole near her home. While most of us were thrilled, Nancy, who is a fierce Osprey supporter and has been reporting on nesting of Ospreys at this pole for several seasons, had this to say when I called her, "Phooey".

I'm off to Arizona until May. Happy April 1<sup>st</sup>!